The Intonation of Romanian Greetings: A Sociolinguistics Approach

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Abstract : In a language the inventory of greetings is dynamic with frequent input and output, although this is hardly noticed by the speakers. In this register, there are a number of constant, conservative elements that survive different language models (among them, the classic formulae: bună ziua! (good afternoon!), bună seara! (good evening!), noapte bună! (good night!), la revedere! (goodbye!) and a number of items that fail to pass the test of time, according to language use at a time (ciao!, pa!, bai!). The source of innovation depends both of internal factors (contraction, conversion, combination of classic formulae of greetings), and of external ones (borrowings and calques). Their use imposes their frequencies at once, namely the elimination of the use of others. This paper presents a sociolinguistic approach of contemporary Romanian greetings, based on prosodic surveys in two research projects: AMPRom, and SoRoEs. Romanian language presents a rich inventory of questions (especially partial interrogatives questions/WH-Q) which are used as greetings, alone or, more commonly accompanying a proper greeting. The representative of the typical formulae is Ce mai faci? (How are you?), which, unlike its English counterpart How do you do?, has not become a stereotype, but retains an obvious emotional impact, while serving as a mark of sociolinguistic group. The analyzed corpus consists of structures containing greetings recorded in the main Romanian cultural (urban) centers. From the methodological point of view, the acoustic analysis of the recorded data is performed using software tools (GoldWave, Praat), identifying intonation patterns related to three sociolinguistics variables: age, sex and level of education. The intonation patterns of the analyzed statements are at the interface between partial questions and typical greetings.